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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: Riboflavin. Information from nutritionists of the United States
Department of Agriculture.

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At a benefit fashion show I saw recently, the models wore clothes stylish in our grandmother's day. It was precious. The high top shoes, the stiff starched collars, the funny little bonnets created quite a stir. A woman sitting near me said, "How quaint! But wouldn't you hate to wear those clothes now!"

"Why?" I asked her.

"But times have changed," she told me. And she was right. We women are so busy doing all the things we have to do now than we can't afford to be hampered by the quaint little dresses and shoes popular two generations ago.

Our clothes fashions are only one thing that's changed. Take what we eat, for example. Very few of us sit down to the overstuffed dinners like grandmother was accustomed to serving. We've learned a lot about foods and what they do for us since then.

In our lifetime, terms like "vitamins" and "minerals" and "proteins" have come out of scientific research reports to be used by me and you and our neighbors in everyday conversation. While we've still got a lot to learn about foods and what they mean to us, we're several counts ahead of our grandmothers on that score.

Not very long ago I heard a man laughing. "Why," he said, "my grandfather lived to be ninety-two, and he did it without vitamins. There weren't any such animals in his day." Maybe his grandfather never heard of vitamins, but we all know that he certainly didn't live without them. The chances are his grandfather ate plenty of the right foods and ate them everyday. Maybe he didn't have any other choice. He probably ate just what he grew at home. Turnip greens and



collards and potatoes from his year-round garden. Fruits, tomatoes, and all the other vegetables he grew and his wife put up for winter. Pork and beef and poultry right off his own farm. Milk and butter and cheese from his cows. Flour that he'd had ground from his own grain. Yes....I'll bet the old man fared pretty well. Better than many of us today...who buy our foods from the corner grocery store.

Not that I'm advocating a return to the "good ole days." Far from it. Few of us are in a position to go back to depending almost entirely on what we grow for what we eat....even if we wanted to. Which we don't. Because of the improvements in farm methods, plant varieties, animal breeds and marketing methods, we have the opportunity now to eat better foods than our grandmothers and grandfathers ate. The choice of what we eat is up to us. .

During the early part of the thirties, the American diet was nothing to brag about. But it wasn't necessarily my fault if I didn't eat well....or yours if you chose the wrong foods. Our incomes weren't anything to brag about either. And we didn't have much money to spend on foods. The question wasn't..."What foods are good for us?" It was..."What foods can we afford."

For the past few years, however, Mrs. America has been able to set a better table. And she's been doing just that. The food economists of the United States Department of Agriculture have recently finished a study of the American diet. It shows that on the whole we're eating better than we were a few years before the war. There are still some danger points, though. For one thing, a lot of people get too little riboflavin.

Riboflavin, you know, is one of the B vitamins. It's necessary for growth for general good health, and for preserving youth and vigor. While few people are really sick from lack of it, far too many are below par because they don't get the amount they need for best health.

Research made not long ago seems to connect the amount of riboflavin a person needs with the amount of fats, sugars and starches he eats. Somebody who eats more

of these energy foods needs more riboflavin.

What foods do we get riboflavin from? Well....milk is probably our best source. It furnishes almost half our supply of the vitamin in our country's food supply. Of course, it isn't the most concentrated source of riboflavin -- liver, kidney, cheese, eggs and some greens like kale have more of it in them -- but milk can be served more often than any of those other foods. So it's a source of a good part of our daily riboflavin requirement. In fact, the specialists now think we ought to drink more milk for best health than they used to think. An adult should get 3 cups every day. Children need from 3 to 4 cups. Expectant mothers ought to have at least 4 cups and nursing mothers...six.

Here's an interesting fact about the vitamin. Light destroys it. Putting that fact to practical application, we want to keep our milk out of the light. Particularly out of the bright sunlight. Bottled milk can lose as much as three fourths of its riboflavin if it's left directly in the sun for only two and a half hours. But in the dark, it loses none. Milk can be kept a week in the refrigerator without losing any of this vitamin.

Besides milk and liver and the other sources I mentioned, we can get riboflavin from meats, fish, poultry, dry beans and peas and peanuts. It's also in all white bread we buy. The commercially made white bread has been enriched with it. There's no law requiring the enrichment of flour, but some of it is enriched too. And that is, a good source of riboflavin.

Well...that's the latest story in our food and its science. For the country as a whole, we don't have enough riboflavin in our diets. We can get it from milk, from liver, kidney, eggs, cheese and some greens like kale. We also get it from all meat, poultry, fish, dry beans and peas. From enriched white bread and enriched flour. Whether or not we'll do anything to correct that lack is up to us. We're the ones to say whether or not we're going to keep up with the times.

